

The Bush-Ford Tie

OUT on the golf course near his Rancho Mirage, Calif., home Jerry Ford doubtless is chuckling these days. He's seeing his short-lived presidency being given new life.

George Bush is at the helm, Brent Scowcroft at Bush's side, James Baker at State, and now Richard Cheney taking over at Defense. The President and these three key appointees obviously comprise the power nucleus of this new administration. And they were all part of Mr. Ford's team - all of them his "boys."

Under President Ford these men held key positions. Mr. Bush headed the Central Intelligence Agency; Mr. Cheney was chief of staff; Mr. Scowcroft was, as he is now, national security advisor; and Mr. Baker, after serving high up at Commerce, became Ford's top political advisor and campaign shaper in 1976.

Later, in President Carter's administration, they tried to persuade Ford to run again. In fact, Baker who had become Bush's campaign aide and strategist, told me back in the winter of 1975-76 that Bush's early campaigning was to hold the ground for a later Ford entry. When Ford decided otherwise, Bush stayed on - to win Mr. Reagan's grudging respect and become Reagan's choice for vice-president.

Somehow it has been forgotten where Bush's allegiances really were - and are. Because of his loyalty to President Reagan, Bush has become in the eyes of the media and the public a 100-percent "Reagan man." The two became good friends and worked closely together. But Reagan's GOP political roots go back to Goldwater conservatism, even back to Robert Taft. And Bush's basic philosophy goes back to Dwight Eisenhower and a more moderate point of view. That's where Ford fits, too.

Remember how the Republican right wing expressed its distrust of Vice-President Bush and Reagan's chief of staff, James Baker? They called them "liberals" and charged them with "capturing" President Reagan.

Bush and Ford confer frequently, and Ford (and Baker) recommended that Bush choose Cheney. No doubt, Ford has been bending Bush's ear on taxes, too. He's doubtless telling Bush that he must cut, cut, cut expenditures - but, having done so, he must find some way of raising revenue. And Bush, despite his pledge not to raise taxes, is doubtless listening to his old boss.

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times _____
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The Wall Street Journal _____
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USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____

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Bush really isn't a believer in Reaganomics. Evidently he tried to live at peace with Reagan's economic concept in order to keep peace with his President. But deep Bush probably is ready to accept some kind of revenue enhancement - perhaps next year if not in 1989 - if he can't trim existing programs enough to make a substantial dent in the deficit.

At breakfast the other morning James Sasser, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, said that in private talks with Office of Management and Budget head Richard Darman he had found that Mr. Darman had a "private" view on taxes that differed with his public statements. He also found Darman willing, at some point, to look at the possibility of finding new revenue. Darman later denied this. But the memory in this city is of David Stockman, holding private misgivings about Reaganomics while he pushed through Reagan's tax cuts.

So on economics Bush will probably be traditionally conservative - just like Eisenhower and Ford. And on other domestic subjects he will likely be more "moderate" or even "liberal" than Taft and Reagan - more like an Eisenhower or a Rockefeller. Ford was around too briefly to be able to show much of his moderate side, although it was always there.

Forgotten over the years is Eisenhower's ability to pull a respectable amount of support from blacks. In Chicago he took away a surprising number of votes from Adlai Stevenson in both 1952 and 1956. Blacks didn't find Ike threatening.

So when Bush reaches out to blacks and minorities and talks of trying to be a president of all the people, it is really nothing new in the Republican Party. It began, of course, with Abraham Lincoln. But it has lived on with the Eisenhower line of the GOP - of which Bush is a direct descendant.

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